Jealousy

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Jealousy

by ElizaD

Summary

Part four of my seven deadly sins series

Will and Hannibal attend the FBI winter fundraiser together and even though Will isn't sure if this is a date he finds himself jealous of Hannibal's many admirers.

Can be read as a stand-alone if you wish.

Notes

Welcome returning readers and new. I am aware that technically it is envy, not jealousy that is so naughty but jealousy fits Will so much better.

Enjoy.

See the end of the work for more notes

Hannibal arrived at Will's house at the agreed time and was surprised to see that Will was not already waiting outside. He knocked on the front door and let himself in when there was no answer but all the lights were lit inside. Will's dogs came forward in hopes of food. Hannibal was prepared and tossed a few treats from his pocket to the other side of the room, saving his clothes from the dog hair. They raced off after the unusual meat, leaving only Winston, nuzzling demurely at his hand, requesting attention. "Hello Winston," he said softly bending down to stoke his head a few times. "Where is your master?" He wondered aloud.

"I'm up here," Will called from the bedroom. Hannibal followed the voice upstairs with Winston trotting behind him. "Hey," Will greeted with a tight smile. "You avoided dog hair."

"I came prepared," Hannibal explained. "Why are you not ready?" He asked with a hint of disappointment. Will was mostly dressed but not completely. The suit jacket was still hung up and he was missing a tie, both sets of cufflinks sat on the table in front of the mirror rather than on his shirt. Despite not being ready on time, Will did look lovely. He was clean-shaven making him look even younger and more innocent than usual. His hair was somewhat less wild and appeared to have been beaten into submission by copious amounts of hair gel. Hannibal smiled at the effort he had clearly made and was pleased to see that his tailor made suit was flawless.

"I had a crisis," Will joked weakly. Hannibal tilted his head again and waited. "I can't choose a tie, or cufflinks," he said eventually, blushing slightly.

"You are capable of dressing yourself most days. I have never seen you in mismatched shoes or missing important garments," Hannibal observed.

"Yeah, well today I can't seem to choose," Will complained, looking between a tie in each hand.

"Are you feeling stressed"?

"You know I am," Will replied with an edge of annoyance.

"Do you require assistance?" He offered calmly.

Will sighed heavily. "Yes," he almost whispered, head bowed. "Of course you look great," he muttered as Hannibal took the ties from his hand.

"Thank you, Will. I'm sure once you finish getting dressed you will look even more beautiful," he said with an amused smile, putting the tires back in the drawer and searching for another.

"The internet said that orange goes well with blue," Will ventured when his previous selections were discarded.

"I applaud you for doing research Will," he said, finding the tie he had been looking for and smiling. "But I suggest another cool colour," he said, holding up a steel grey tie simply

patterned with discreet silver darts. Will nodded in answer, it had been one of the ones he liked best at the store.

“I like that one,” he said awkwardly as Hannibal approached him.

“I remember,” he said, turning up Will’s collar and looping the silk around his neck. His eyes focused on his actions, partially hiding a smile. Will chose to focus on Hannibal's own tie. It was silver as well but had a swirling blue floral pattern embroidered across the fabric. It matched his light blue shirt and dark grey suit. He really did look great, even better than usual and Will had begun to notice that Hannibal was incapable of not looking great. It should be irritating but when it came to Hannibal, irritating became endearing. He blushed at his wandering thoughts just as Hannibal smoothed his hand down the length of Will’s tie. “Very nice,” he commented. “Would you like me to select your cufflinks?” He asked. Will nodded mutely and Hannibal smiled widened slightly.

There was something soothing about having Hannibal choose his accessories, he had chosen the suit afterall. Will needed to be guided right now after being reminded several times that not showing up tonight was not an option. Jack had threatened to drag him there himself if he was more than fashionably late; luckily he trusted Hannibal to get him there. Will gave in the urge to let someone else take control for a while knowing that he would be forced into talking to strangers at some point tonight. “Diamonds,” Hannibal said with a nod and attached the sparkling jewels to his shirt cuffs. “You know Will,” he said slowly. “Some people actually enjoy parties, a fancy event with music and the food is usually passable. You worry too much.”

“Passable by your standards means delicious,” Will commented.

“Then you must join me for more meals,” Hannibal said, holding Will’s jacket as he slid his arms in. “So I may elevate your standards,” his mouth was close to Will’s ear and he couldn’t contain a full body shiver as sweet warm breath caressed his skin. “The snow is heavier than forecast tonight. May I suggest the scarlet gloves over the green,” he said politely, it didn’t sound like a request.

“Are you sure the snow isn’t too bad to risk driving,” Will asked hopefully.

“No, we will be perfectly safe on the road,” Hannibal said. “The storm should not last too long.”

“But Wolf Trap is so far out, what if it gets worse?” Will asked as Hannibal herded him towards the door.

“Then you will come back to my place which is much closer to the venue,” he said. Will almost stopped dead in his tracks, replaying the sentence in his head. There was no flirtation in his tone and the silky deepness was sadly absent as well. The comment was just a quip, and Will hated the disappointment he felt. “Put your coat on please.”

“I’m sick?” He whined. Hannibal gave a soft huff of laughter and moved to stand in front of Will. He brought his hands up to Will’s jaw, his fingers feeling for any swelling. With a soft sigh he placed a hand flat against his forehead, leaving it there for several seconds.

“You are perfectly fine Will,” he said firmly. “Do you not trust me?” He asked softly, with a note of sadness in his tone.

“W-what?” Will stammered in surprise, his coat half on. “Of course I do,” he protested with wide eyes as he realised that every word was true.

“Then trust me to take care of you tonight,” he said softly, buttoning up Will’s coat. “Will you do that for me?” He asked, looking at him with intensity.

“Yeah,” Will whispered, somewhat breathlessly.

“Good,” Hannibal answered, stepping back. Suddenly it felt like there was much more air in the room than there had been a moment ago. “Come. We do not want to try Uncle Jack’s patience by arriving late.”

“Yes Daddy,” Will grumbled before going bright scarlet. He’d meant it as a joke, not like that, but he heard how it came out a second after he said it and prayed to any deity listening to turn back the clock just a few seconds. No deity was listening, it seemed, or they were enjoying his mortification as much as Hannibal was. Will chanced a quick glance up at Hannibal and almost groaned at the immensely pleased look on his face. “Not a word,” he said, his tongue thick and clumsy. He jerked on his gloves, eyes stubbornly fixed on the floor. His fingers were so confused he found it impossible to secure the poppers and kept his gaze low as Hannibal took his hands and did it himself. Hannibal opened the door without a word and Will walked outside taking a deep gulp of the sharp winter air.

He turned his face upwards into the flurry of flakes, letting it cool his flaming face. The snow smoothed the frown away from his face as he closed his eyes and inhaled, the smell of pine trees mixing with the scent of his aftershave. His mind was full of the more exciting smell of Hannibal’s cologne. Hot and almost spicy with something tart like the coppery smell of blood underneath, the mix made his mouth water. “Will,” he was pulled out of his moment of peace by the sound of Hannibal’s voice. He turned to see Hannibal stood holding the passenger door open and looking at Will expectantly. Will squirmed, looking at him with a hint of desperation, his mind searching for any reason not to leave. Hannibal let out an audible sigh, ending with a low growl. He strode toward Will purposefully, suddenly looking very large and imposing, mouth set in a firm line, not scowling but no longer smiling. The neutral expression made Will very nervous and he stayed rooting to the spot.

When he reached Will, Hannibal took his arm in a vice-like grab and all but dragged him to the car, Will’s feet scrambling to keep up with his long steps. His expression stayed blank and he did not say a word as he manhandled Will into the passenger seat, even buckling him in before slamming the door shut. Once Hannibal folded himself into the driver seat, Will turned to snap that he could do his own seatbelt but had barely opened his mouth when Hannibal spoke first. “Enough,” Will’s mouth snapped shut, Hannibal's voice was dangerously soft. “I understand that you are more reluctant than I had previously thought to attend this event but I will not tolerate this behaviour any longer. If you wish to go back inside now and deal with Jack’s wrath I will not stop you but if you choose to attend with me, as planned, I expect you to behave yourself,” he finished, facing the windscreen rather than Will, Though his voice and face were calm his jaw was tight.

“You want to go,” Will said, timidly.

“Yes,” he replied. “I know many of the attendees and have always enjoyed such events, despite the high price of a ticket.”

“I thought you were invited,” Will said.

“The whole point of this party is to raise money. I was invited to purchase a ticket,” he explained.

“I’m sorry,” he said, squirming.

“Apology accepted,” he finally turned to face Will. “Are you going to attend willingly or will I be, ‘going stag’ I believe is the term?” He asked gently.

“I’m coming,” Will answered. Hannibal raised an eyebrow, expression stern. “I’ll be good,” he said, wincing at the childlike sound of his voice. “I think the suit deserves to be shown off anyway,” he said, forcing a smile.

Hannibal gave a tiny smile in response. “I do intend to make this evening as easy for you as possible,” he replied.

“I know, thank you Doctor Lecter.”

Hannibal nodded and started the engine.

Will gazed out of the window as they slowly made their way towards the hotel hosting the event. The snow continued to fall thick and fast transforming the grey streets into a winter wonderland. Will found the falling snow and frosted houses soothing and the pit in his stomach lessened slightly. “I love the snow,” he said eventually.

“It is very pretty,” Hannibal agreed, concentrating on the road. “Though I am glad to not be driving back tonight.”

“You’re not?” Will asked.

“Driving while inebriated is very dangerous, especially in these conditions,” he answered.

“You’re planning on becoming inebriated?” Will asked with a smirk.

“Yes,” Hannibal answered. “I have a great appreciation for the finer things, that includes champagne.”

“How are you getting home?” He asked.

“There is a wonderful service called a taxi cab,” Hannibal said with a small smile.

“I can’t imagine you in a cab,” Will said with a small laugh.

“After tonight you will not have to,” Hannibal carefully manoeuvred the Bently into a space near the back of the car park.

“If the snow continues we may need to get a room instead,” Will said.

“I’m willing if you are,” Hannibal, his eyes heated but his mouth quirked in an amused smile.

“Go easy on the champagne Doctor Lecter,” Will said with his own amused smile as Hannibal killed the engine.

“Hannibal,” Will looked at him curiously. “I think, for tonight at least, you should call me by my first name, Will. Despite your resistance it would seem we have become friendly.” Hannibal placed a bare palm over Will’s gloved hand, the heat easily seeping through the leather and fur. Will bit his lower lip as he looked at where they connected but didn’t move his hand.

“Friendly,” he wondered under his breath. “Hannibal, is this a date?” He blurted. Hannibal stayed silent, waiting until Will faced him to answer. Relenting Will turned his head and focused on the fair hair falling over Hannibal’s brow.

“Would you like it to be?” He asked, voice careful and measured.

“Don’t do that,” Will muttered. “When you asked me, did you see tonight as a date?” He asked.

“When you accepted, did you see tonight as a date?” He asked, earning a glare from Will. “What do you consider the difference between a romantic date and attending an event together, as friendly acquaintances?” he asked, slightly teasing.

“I don’t know,” Will answered. “Flirting.”

“Alana tells me you have a habit of flitiously changing the subject,” Hannibal said, watching Will intently.

“I don’t like you discussing me with her,” Will complained.

“If it makes you more comfortable Alana avoids the subject of you as much as possible,” Hannibal reassured him. “She simply observed that we have that particular habit in common.”

“Romantic advances,” Will answered. “A goodnight kiss.”

“Friends don’t kiss,” Hannibal was clearly enjoying the discussion.

“Not as a rule,” Will replied dryly.

“If you ask, I will promise to make no romantic advances on you, tonight.” Hannibal promised, head tilting slightly.

“If I don’t?” he whispered, risking a glance at Hannibal's crimson eyes.

“Then we have the potential for a goodnight kiss,” Hannibal said, voice like silk and white teeth gleaming between parted lips.

“That doesn’t exactly answer my question,” Hannibal’s smile widened but he did not answer. “Hannibal?”

“You are the one with a gift for interpreting the evidence, Will,” he answered softly. He got out of the car and opened the passenger door, holding a hand out to Will in invitation. “You cannot gather evidence sitting in the car all night.”

Will took his hand cautiously as he exited the car. “I’m not asking, yet,” he said. “but that doesn’t mean this is a date,” he warned.

Hannibal nodded with a soft smile and gently steered Will towards the entrance with a hand on his elbow. “I look forward to discussing your conclusion at a later date.”

Will smiled tightly, growing tense as they got closer to the double doors, flanked by decorated trees. “Breathe, Will, there is nothing to be afraid of,” Hannibal reminded him, tucking Will’s hand into the crook of his arm, a very date-like position.

“Any chance I can get through this by just standing there and looking pretty,” he muttered, possibly joking but not sure.

“You look exceptionally beautiful tonight Will,” Hannibal told him firmly. “I’m sure you Will charm everyone whether you speak or not.” They checked their coats and paused long enough for Hannibal to drop a large check in the donation basket before entering the main ballroom. Even Will smiled at the elegant silver and blue decorations surrounding the room. He looked up at the large mural on the ceiling.

“The nine muses of ancient Greece,” Hannibal supplied.

“It’s beautiful,” Will answered.

“Art based upon the classics is my favourite,” Hannibal answered, pleased. “Do you have a favourite style of art?”

“I don’t know anything about art but we had a gallery at college full of modern art, I hated it,” he said with a short laugh.

“Modern art had a tendency to border on the pretentious,” Hannibal agreed with a nod.

“I like this,” Will ventured, gesturing to the ceiling. Hannibal grabbed a couple of glasses of champagne from a passing tray and handed one to Will.

“To more traditional art,” he said before clinking their glasses, staring at Will as he took a sip.

“Will!” Hannibal’s face momentarily twisted at Jack’s bark, calling for his bloodhound. Will’s hand tightened his grip on the crook of Hannibal’s elbow as they approached Jack, standing with a few elegantly dressed strangers and Beverley sparkling in a sinfully tight red dress.

“Good Evening, Jack,” Hannibal greeted him, the FBI has outdone itself.

“Don’t you scrub up well?” Beverley said to Will, her cheeks flushed from champagne already. “I am very impressed and you should avoid mistletoe unless you want things to become rather awkward in the morgue,” she joked lightly.

“Merry Christmas Beverley,” Will said with a tolerant smile.

“This is Miss Constance Jarvel.” Jack said, gesturing to a petite woman with a black pixie cut and a sweet smile. “Miss Jarvel, this is one of our Special Agents Will Graham and Doctor Hannibal Lecter who consults on occasion.”

“Tonight I am only here as a guest and donor,” Hannibal said. “Constance, how lovely to see you again,” he leaned forward to press a light kiss on her cheek.

“Hannibal and I go way back,” she announced to the group in general. “He always brought the most lovely flowers to my performances,” she purred in her deep voice, stroking his bicep affectionately. Will felt a stab of something in his gut as he looked the tiny woman up and down. She looked younger than Hannibal but older than Will, her shimmering periwinkle blue dress skimmed her delicate body, devoid of curves. Her smile was warm and friendly though she clearly found Hannibal more worthy of it than anyone else. Will inched closer to Hannibal, leaning against him slightly.

“Will,” Hannibal turned to him, placing a hand over Will’s. “Constance and I have known each other for nearly two decades now and she is one of the reasons I have seen Swan Lake more times than anyone should. She is the most enrapturing swan queen to have ever graced the stage.” his eyes stayed fixed on Will even as he sang the woman’s praises.

“You’re a ballerina?” He asked the woman.

“Oh aren’t you sweet,” she almost squealed, her deep voice going up several notes. “I like him,” she told Hannibal, resting a cool hand on WIll’s arm and moving closer.

“As do I,” Hannibal agreed softly.

“No Mr. Graham, I am afraid my days on the stage have passed. I am a choreographer now, every bit as mentally and emotionally taxing, however now I can eat chocolate cake,” she said with a laugh. “Ah, Georgie, my darling!” She greeted a short plump man in an expensive suit stretched tight over his stomach. “This is my husband George,” she supplied,

“Hello Doctor Lecter, wonderful to see you again,” he said excitedly, gazing at Hannibal with much more interest than he did his wife. “Oh, and who is this?” He asked, eyes trailing over Will with narrowed eyes before nodding with a slimy smile spreading over his face.

“This is Will Graham, one of the FBI’s most brilliant agents,” Hannibal said, saving him from having to talk to the man.

“Brains and beauty,” The man commented. “I do hope you don’t intend to keep this lovely creature glued to your side all night Hannibal.”

“That is exactly what I intend,” Hannibal informed him, his tone slightly chilled.

“Pity. It has been so long since you and I have had a private chat,” he leaned in to Hannibal as his wife moved to Will’s other side.

“Don’t you worry, sweet one,” she said discreetly. “Georgie and I have a marriage of convenience and he has been trying to have his way with Hannibal for several years,” she rolled her eyes. “Hannibal has always had better taste in partners,” she said with a wink.

“We’re not… that is…” Will floundered, unconsciously tugging on Hannibal’s arm. “F-first date?” He stammered weakly.

“If you will excuse me, I need to steal Will away for a moment,” Jack looked ready to protest. “I will make sure to speak to you again before we depart,” he said smoothly.

“I do hope so Doctor,” George simpered pathetically, Will glared down at him, resting his head lightly on Hannibal’s shoulder until they were several feet away.

“He was rude,” he snapped once they were out of range.

“George?” Hannibal asked. “A talented composer but he makes me long for the days when people could be bothered to keep their extra marital activities discreet,” he agreed.

“I can’t believe how obvious he was being in front of his wife, in front of me,” Will continued as Hannibal led him to a secluded corner.

“His behaviour bothered you?” Hannibal asked, head tilted.

“It didn’t bother you?” Will asked.

“His attention is irritating,” Hannibal agreed. “I have no interest in him, Will,” he said, tone reassuring.

“I know that,” Will almost snapped.

“Good,” Hannibal answered, face carefully controlled.

Will let his gaze travel over the room of smartly dressed people, all socialising as though it was the easiest thing in the world. “They’re all looking at you,” he said quietly, a sour taste filling his mouth and a low flame settling behind his sternum. Hannibal followed his eyes, surveying the room with his usual cool detachment.

“No, dear Will,” he said smoothly. “They are all admiring you,” Will scoffed and shook his head. “Does it bother you, their eyes?”

“No. Just wondering how many people I will need to watch throw themselves at you,” he said, mouth twisting. Hannibal hid his smile in the lip of his champagne flute.

“You would rather keep me all to yourself?” He asked, gently teasing. Will sighed and looked up at Hannibal.

“Sorry, again.” he said with a humourless laugh.

“For?” Hannibal prompted, arranging his face into a mildly confused expression.

“I’m looking for more excuses not to socialise,” he said reluctantly.

“I noticed,” Hannibal said softly. “I’m sure we can stay hidden away in our corner for a little while longer.”

“I feel like I’m ruining your night,” Will said apologetically.

“Impossible, Will,” Hannibal answered. “Your jealousy is flattering and I would be satisfied to spend the rest of the night admiring you myself,” he watched Will take half a step back and waited patiently. He didn’t ask Hannibal to stop.

“I don’t think Jack will allow that,” Will answered, slightly breathless.

“No, you are here to be shown off after all,” Hannibal agreed, reluctantly. “Many more socialites for you to charm, are you ready?” He asked, placing a hand on the small of Will’s back.

“No,” Will answered, draining his glass. He nodded, shortly. “Lead the way Hannibal.”

Will allowed the chatter and music wash over him, trusting Hannibal to guide him through the waves of people. Hannibal did as he promised, after introducing Will in a manner that made it clear they should be honoured to meet the FBI’s most brilliant agent, he re-directed their conversation. Rather than explaining the way Will’s mind worked he smoothly discussed art and music as Will tried to sink into the quiet of the stream. The more people they talked to the harder it became. Most of the guests Hannibal introduced him to greeted him politely enough but they way they looked at him, with appreciation and intrigue, made him nervous and he found himself moving closer to Hannibal. Will was aware that his body language implied that he was spoken for despite the fact that the exact nature of the evening was still undefined.

Their eyes on him were unpleasant but their hands on Hannibal were infuriating. Almost every person they spoke found some reason to touch him, a kiss on the cheek, a hand on his arm as though they could not resist his magnetism. Every time they moved into his personal space or fluttered their lashes at the older man, Will felt his mouth flood with a sour acid and the flame in his torso burned a little brighter. It was not a pleasant warmth like he felt when Hannibal smiled at him with fondness or held his gaze with naked want; it was like being cooked on the inside and only subsided when Hannibal sensed he needed to escape and gave some excuse to whisk Will away. Will knew what the feeling was, despite it being completely irrational. He was jealous.

He didn’t want to share Hannibal’s attention and he didn’t like watching most of Baltimore swoon over him. It seemed like Hannibal knew everybody present and Will felt like he was competing with them all, though Hannibal never once left his side. There was the occasional man or woman who decided that Will was more their type and when they tried to move in close or, heaven forbid, lay an almost innocent hand on him, Hannibal immediately pulled

him closer, his eyes turning cold. No matter how many people he was entertaining he was always acutely aware of Will.

Hannibal was playing a delicate game with Will. He charmed every person they met and never discouraged their attention while he focused intently on Will. He could almost smell his jealousy and he revelled in it, encouraged it. It wasn't a kind game, especially as his dear Will was unaware they were playing. Hannibal could justify it as a way to gauge Will's complex feelings or to force his hand into action but in truth Hannibal was enjoying the way his eyes glowed, the clear blue almost appearing green. Jealousy was a pointless emotion but every sin he drew out of Will was more beautiful than the last, his cocoon opening more and more as Hannibal whispered promises of devotion to the creature waiting to emerge. He pushed Will, choosing to introduce them to those who had the most history with Hannibal, even forcing Will to witness thinly veiled comments from past lovers just so he could watch those lovely eyes change colour, Will's jaw clenching as though trying to hold back a growl. Everytime it became too much he drew Will away and spoiled him with undivided attention before drawing him back into the crowd of people yet again.

Will was completely unaware of how his submissive attitude, broken by rare short sentences, made him all the more appealing. An audience of people always talking and being talked at found his silence intriguing, convinced that there was something more underneath. Beautiful and mysterious, they were all so captivated by him and Hannibal delighted in his ability to steal him away for himself. Eyes flitted over them, tucked away with their heads bent close together, noting that he spoke freely with Hannibal and the ever present gossip turned to the nature of their relationship. Hannibal ignored them all and relished having his Will all to himself.

Hannibal was not pleased to have their alone time interrupted by Fredrick Chilton who had clearly had several more drinks than his short stature could handle. His face was bright pink from the flush of drunkenness and he was swaying, looking even more unattractive than usual despite the fact he was smiling rather than sneering as he lumbered gracelessly towards them. Will groaned out loud. "I really don't want to deal with him right now," he whispered to Hannibal. Hannibal discreetly pulled WIll closer, moving so he was partially in front. Will was not hidden but he was protected. This physical display was not enough to deter the tipsy, horny Fredrick. "Hannibal," he greeted with a dopey smile before his shining eyes focused on Will.

"Good evening Doctor Chilton," Hannibal answered cooly, his casual charming demeanour cast aside.

"And the always fascinating Will Graham," he purred in an unattractive manner. "I see your mind is not the only inviting part of you," his gaze was even less discreet than most as he slowly took in every inch of Will, almost moaning at the sight. "Turn around for me?" He requested, his attempts at flirting could be considered comical but as ridiculous as he was Hannbal still wanted to tear out his throat with his teeth.

"No," Will said shortly.

"Spoilsport," Frederick said with a pout. Hannibal moved forward, placing himself between Will and Chilton with a disdainful look at the disgusting pig. "I assume you dressed him up

so nicely?" He said, addressing Hannibal before giggling. "Not literally, that would be terribly unethical," he said suggestively. "Of course you would have the tastiest morsel in the room in your arm. You almost did have a taste for the rare and beautiful," his tone was overly flirtatious as he leaned in close and when one of his hands reached out to discreetly touch Hannibal's fingers Will felt himself snap.

He grabbed the hand that Chilton was reaching for before he had a chance to make contact. "Hannibal would you like to dance?" He asked, ignoring Chilton completely. Hannibal turned his back on Chilton, hiding his surprise with a delighted smile.

"I would like nothing more," he answered smoothly and without even glancing back at the lesser man he accompanied Will to the small dancefloor. "Is this song a favourite or was this a desperate ploy to escape Chilton's poor attempts at seduction?" he asked, pulling Will in closer. He did not recognise the tune but guided Will's responsive body around the dance floor with well practised grace.

"I thought having him try to get into my head was bad," Will responded.

"I do hope he is more subtle when not so obviously intoxicated," Hannibal commented.

"Barely," Will answered. He felt Hannibal press him closer to his body.

"I did not appreciate the way he spoke about you," Hannibal said, voice low. "Or to you."

"He thinks we are here on a date," Will observed. Hannibal paused before answering, considering pointing out that clearly, by accident or design, this evening had become their first date.

"And yet he believes it is appropriate to flirt so unashamedly," he responded instead. "Unforgivably rude. However, if it was his behaviour that pushed you to dance with me then I find myself in a rather forgiving mood."

Will glanced down at his feet, only Hannibal's firm grip keeping him from tripping himself up. "I only dance when trying to escape conversation," he eventually answered.

"An effective strategy, in this case at least," Hannibal answered.

"I didn't want him to touch you," Will said, before blushing furiously and for some reason hiding his burning face against Hannibal's shoulder. He felt the rumble of Hannibal's soft laughter more clearly than he heard it. "Too much champagne," he mumbled weakly.

"Yes, he has clearly over indulged," Hannibal said, deliberately misunderstanding, knowing that Will would be far too embarrassed to correct him. "While I suspect your actions were motivated by jealousy rather than chivalry I do appreciate the rescue," he said smoothly, close enough to smell the sharp, sugary scent of his jealousy.

"I wasn't jealous," Will muttered, face still turned into Hannibal's neck. Hannibal let the hand on Will's back move up to lightly brush over his curls but did not argue.

“I like this song,” he said. Will burst out laughing, and managed to stammer out an apology before dissolving into laughter again. “What is so funny?” He asked, the sound of Will’s laughter causing him to grin.

“It’s Miley Cyrus,” he replied, still laughing. “A classical version without lyrics but still, you like Miley Cryrus.”

“Is there something funny about that?” Hannibal asked, basking in the sound of Will’s laughter.

“Not if you’re a thirteen year old girl.”

“And you recognise the song even without the lyrics,” Hannibal pointed out.

“Blame Jimmy,” Will replied with a shrug.

“I believe you,” Hannibal said, smirk obvious in his tone. The song came to an end and Will felt all the air leave his body when Hannibal dipped him. Their eyes met as another song began. “One more dance?” Hannibal asked, voice rough and eyes full of desire. Will nodded mutely as he was swept up into a standing position, still holding tightly onto Hannibal, his face turned into his neck, pretending the rest of the world did not exist. The song was another variation of something in the charts but Will could not have named it if he had a gun to his head. His mind and senses were filled with Hannibal, the warmth of his body encircling him and making him feel cherished, good enough.

When this song ended Hannibal stepped back, a fond smile on his face. “Thank you, Will,” he said with sincerity. “Another drink?” he suggested, with a cheeky smile. Will’s mouth was bone dry and his body thrumming with adrenaline.

“Yeah, another drink would be good,” he replied, tongue feeling heavy and awkward in his mouth. Hannibal linked their arms again and found them a small bench to sit on.

“I am having a very enjoyable time with you Will,” Hannibal said, handing him another glass of wine. “I hope you have not felt too overwhelmed.”

“It’s not been as bad as I expected,” Will replied. “Still too many people but I feel like I can handle it when you’re there to distract them. You’ve been amazing. Thank you Hannibal,” he met Hannibal’s eyes without hesitation, his lips already open in invitation as he leaned forward in anticipation. Their lips were only an inch apart and Hannibal felt that thrill of victory when a loud excited squeal interrupted the moment.

“Hanni!” He drew back from the promise of joy with a low growl, forcing down the urge to immediately murder whoever had so rudely robbed him of that joy. A few seconds later the rest of his brain caught up and he recognised the voice, moving to his feet his eyes widened and his face split into a grin.

It took Will a few seconds more to recover as he watched a brunette woman almost leap into Hannibal’s arms, giggling when Hannibal returned the hug, lifting her off his feet before they both began chattering wildly in French, he moved to his feet, stomach churning with jealousy

and a hint of hatred towards the strange woman. He stood watching their exchange, he didn't think he'd ever made Hannibal look so joyous. As they enthusiastically spoke, far too fast for Will to keep up with, he took in the woman's appearance. She looked to be younger than Hannibal, closer to his own age and quite beautiful. Her brunette hair was swept up in an elegant updo with loose spirals framing her long face, her creamy shoulders left bare above her mint green dress. Her slight body was wrapped up tightly by the fabric, down to her tiny waist where it floated out into layers of chiffon. The smile spread over her face made her look innocent and child-like but her eyes were almost black. Large bambi eyes that reflected the lights illuminating the room.

Eventually Hannibal remembered Will was there and turned to him, hand in hand with the dark beauty. "Will, this is Gabi, one of my favourite people in the world," he said before turning back to the beaming woman. "You get more lovely every time I see you," he complimented her.

"How do you still look so good?" She asked. "Some men age like sour milk but you are a fine wine," she said with a melodious laugh. "It is Will, yes?" She asked. Her English was flawless despite the strong French accent wrapped around her words. "My name is Gabrielle Fayette, Hanni and I grew up together. It has been many years since we have seen each other and I had no idea he would be here tonight."

"It's nice to meet you," Will replied, making very little effort to sound convincing as he returned to his seat.

Smiling pleasantly she released Hannibal's hand and sat in front of Will, focusing her large dark eyes on him. He immediately tensed up under her scrutiny, even when he felt the warmth of Hannibal settle on his other side. "Are you connected to the FBI or is Hannibal trying to impress you with this lavish ball?" She asked with a light laugh.

"Will is - " she cut off Hannibal with an annoyed shush and turned attention back to Will, gesturing for him to continue.

"I sometimes work as a special agent but my main job is teaching future agents," he said, avoiding her eyes. She had the same quality as Hannibal, the ability to make him feel as though she could see into him.

"Oh," she breathed, mouth wide. "You are Will Graham?" She asked, and he nodded nervously. "My assistant is addicted to that awful blog!" She announced, clasping her hands together in excitement. "You are wonderful! I cannot tell you how many times I have almost bitten my own tongue off to avoid confrontation. Oh, the way you spoke to that classless excuse for a journalist. 'It's not very smart to threaten someone who thinks about killing people for a living'. I adore you for that," she said with a wide grin. "Hannibal, I like him," she spoke over his shoulder.

"So do I," he answered warmly, placing a hand on Will's waist.

"I wish my boss agreed with you about how I handled the situation, he wasn't pleased," he said.

“He was upset with you, for standing up to that unbearable snoop?” She asked, frowning in confusion. “Is this a cultural thing?”

“I don’t think threatening her made me look sane,” he answered dryly.

“But she snuck into crime scenes and accused you of being a potential killer and if half of the ‘facts’ she posted about crimes were true she must have employed some very underhanded tactics,” she protested passionately. “Hannibal, you agree, yes?”

“Of course, Jack Crawford was also very unhappy with me for letting Will speak to her in that way,” she said with a slight chuckle. “I greatly enjoyed it,” Will turned to look at Hannibal.

“Seriously?”

“You know my opinion of Freddie Lounds and silencing you so early in our relationship would have been terribly presumptuous of me,” he answered smoothly.

“You don’t need to be silenced, you handled her admirably,” Gabi reassured him. “But I am curious, how does your mind work? I assume you are not a serial killer but your abilities are so interesting, I have never heard of anything like it before.”

“Will is quite unique,” Hannibal interjected.

“Clearly. Is your condition truly not shared by anyone else? If so I imagine you can say whatever you like,” she said with a laugh. “Never forget that your employer needs you, people now seem so desperate for work they will take all sorts of abuse. I hope he pays you what you are worth. Have you always seen the world this way? I can’t imagine growing up was easy with that sort of insight, teenagers in particular seem to hate being perceived as their true selves. I worked in fashion for years before moving into real art and without fail teenage girls are the most obsessed with clothes and labels. They are incapable of deciding for themselves what looks good so they wear whatever the celebs wear and think it is impressive. My Mother was the same, Thank God for Miss Celine, she would never let her look anything less than perfect. Clearly she has worked her magic on you tonight, I know her work and I know Hannibal would never allow you to go elsewhere. Did he actually let you choose your own tie? Because for him that’s rather a big deal,” Will was becoming overwhelmed by her questioning and swift topic changes. “Have you read Hannibal’s paper on social exclusion? He shakily shook his head.

“Gabi,” Hannibal warned gently.

“I’m getting to know your lovely friend,” she said innocently.

“You are bombarding him with questions at an entirely inappropriate time,” he argued.

“My apologies Hanni, would you prefer I wait for your rehearsal dinner as you did?” she asked, straightening her shoulders. “His first time meeting my now husband, he cornered him and I still don’t know what he said but my poor Samuel was shaking by the end. He is still afraid to be left alone with Hannibal,” she narrowed her eyes at Hannibal in mock suspicion.

“My manners were impeccable as always, I simply gave him the chance to prove himself good enough for you,” he said, calmly taking a sip of champagne.

“Well whatever you said he was quite affected.”

“Luckily for him he met my standards,” Hannibal.

“And your standards are so important,” she said sarcastically.

“If he hadn’t I guarantee you would not be married now.”

“Can you believe him?” She asked, looking to Will in amusement.

“Hannibal is often unbelievable,” he muttered into his glass.

“Yes and you are going to give me the chance to do the same,” she told Hannibal primly.

“Over dinner,” Hannibal said firmly. “Now is not the time,” he reminded her.

“Fine,” she sighed. “Samuel and I are in Baltimore until New Years,” she stopped when the music changed. “Hannibal?” She said, eyes windening further. He shook his head, with a soft smile. “But Sting,” she whined. “It’s our song, mon ami de coeur,” she pouted her plump lips and batted her eyelashes. Hannibal sighed but his expression was still almost unbearably fond.

“I will be back very soon, I promise you,” he said regretfully but followed her willingly to the dance floor, holding in his arms as the lyricless tune of ‘Every Breath You Take’ filled the room. Will watched him go with hurt in his eyes. Hannibal had left after promising not to leave his side and so soon after Will had come so close to kissing him. He would have kissed him had they not been interrupted by the human version of Bambi with her giant eyes and slender limbs. He was unsure of their relationship but he was certain they were not platonic. He spied Chilton not far away and considered catching his attention in the hopes that Hannibal would feel the need to come to his rescue but thought better of it and pressed himself further back, almost hiding behind a decorated pine tree. The darkness in his mind increased the uncomfortable burn now itching in his veins. His mind was full of images of Hannibal and this woman wrapped around each other in ecstasy, laughing together. His stomach burned with jealousy and he longed to pull Hannibal out of her arms where he seemed perfectly happy to be. He sat glaring at them with malice, insecurity eating away at his mind.

Hannibal did feel a small stab of something that resembled guilt when he saw the hurt in his eyes but as he put his arm around Gabi’s wasit he saw them burn green and was even more pleased by her surprise appearance. “Your timing is as abominable as always,” he told her with mild annoyance.

“Were the two of you about to get a room?” She asked teasingly. “I was getting first date vibes from you two. Shocking, and with me without my pearls to clutch.”

“Nothing so shocking, I’m afraid,” he said with a short laugh. “But you must be more gentle with him, I worry he may still be a flight risk.”

“You must be joking Hanni,” she said, rolling her eyes. “The way he leaned back, arching towards you like a flower searching the sun. Even now he is positively seething with jealousy,” she glanced quickly over his shoulder. “If looks could kill.”

“He does wear sin so beautifully,” he almost sighed wistfully.

“My goodness, is the oh so aloof and mysterious Hannibal Lecter falling for someone?” She asked. “Oh this is so exciting! It almost makes up for you breaking my heart all those years ago.”

“I was guilty of nothing and you know it,” he reminded her. “Please stop villainizing me,” he turned them smoothing so he could covertly keep an eye on his Will, always watching over his jealous demon.

“I gave you my heart, Hanni and you broke it,” she said, no malice in her voice.

“You were seven.”

“Nearly eight,” she corrected him, with a sweet smile.

“You will always be the pig-tailed little girl that followed me around my Uncle’s grounds,” He said fondly.

“But you were always so sweet to me,” she answered. “I can feel your boys eyes burning a hole in my back,” she whispered.

“I told you not to scar yourself,” Hannibal said in disapproval, his long fingers tracing over the angel wings tattoo on her left shoulder blade.

“I love my tattoo,” she replied.

“Now.”

“And always. Be nice and I will help you,” she teased.

“Help me how?” Hannibal enquired curiously.

“Jealousy is a monster, shall we feed it?” She suggested, with a devious smile.

“You are a terror,” he said with his own evil smirk.

“I learnt it all from you,” she purred, sliding her arms up to wrap around his neck, leaning up to whisper in his ear. “Do you think we could push him into dragging you off the floor?”

“You underestimate him,” Hannibal responded fondly, leaning in closer and watching Will’s eye glow with fire. His foolish boy, so jealous and with no reason to be. The song came to an end and they slowly separated before making their way back to a quietly furious Will who

immediately jumped to his feet, entwining his fingers with Hannibal's, painfully tight in an obvious show of possessiveness.

Hannibal opened his mouth to offer some honeyed words to soothe his hurt when there was a huge commotion a few feet away. Gabi gasped, her hands flying to her mouth and Will and Hannibal followed her eyes to see an enraged Chilton sprawled across the floor, red faced and struggling to right himself. Zeller was being pulled away roughly by Jack who all but flung him into the hallways, ordering him to calm down. Jimmy followed after him, looking at him as though he hung the moon and the stars.

"Did you see?" Beverley asked, barely containing her laughter.

"No, what happened?" Will asked.

"Chilton was hitting on Price who's just stuck there trying to find some way out of the situation and just as Zeller comes back from the bar that horny moron goes for the ass grab," she informed them. "Zeller lost it, knocked him clean to the floor. Couldn't have happened to a nicer guy right?" She said with a laugh.

"I don't believe I had this displeasure," Gabi said with an uncertain smile.

"Consider yourself lucky my dear," Hannibal said, openly amused by the whole situation. "Clearly I was wrong to leave you alone with such predators lurking, please forgive me," Hannibal purred, directly into Will's ear.

"I'll consider it," he said, trying not to immediately give in but finding it hard not to fold into his arms when warm breath caressed his ear. He missed the conspiratorial look between Beverley and Gabi, despite being complete strangers, they both read the situation loud and clear.

"I'm just glad it finally happened," Beverley said, giving Will the chance to regain his self-control.

"Chilton getting punched?" Will asked.

"No, that was just a plus," Beverley said with a laugh. "I mean Zeller and Price, the flirting, the lingering looks. It was getting down right unsanitary! One more week of that will they, won't they crap and I was locking them in a cupboard with lube and condoms."

"I believe you," Will said with a laugh.

"Alana already stole the keys for me," she said with an evil smile.

"Hanni, your friends are delightful!" Gabi exclaimed.

"Hanni?" Beverley asked with a raised eyeball.

"It is unreasonable to expect a five year old to pronounce the word Hannibal," she replied.

"Woah, so you know him way back when," Beverley said with interest.

“His Aunt and my Mother were very close but I got so bored listening to them gossip about everyone they knew and clothes that I used to follow Hannibal around. He was eleven years older than me but always such a sweet boy,” she said fondly. “And handsome too,” she added, shooting a wink at Will. His skin went cold, the insination causing his skin to explode in goose pimples, crawling unpleasantly.

“So weird to think of Doctor Lecter as a child,” she said in wonderment. “I would love to hear stories but I think someone needs to deal with the rampaging Jack Crawford. Care to volunteer?” She asked Will hopefully.

“No way, he’s already mad at me for not being sociable enough,” Will said shaking his head.

“You have been charming all night,” Hannibal argued. “I suggest we hide,” he said quickly with mock seriousness.

“I guess it falls to me then,” Beverlay said, sighing heavily. “I need to start bringing dates to these things. Especially if wealthy older men are gonna steal all the sexy boys,” she teased, fluttering her long lashes at Will. She emptied her glass and went to assist Alana in calming down Jack who could be heard making angry threats in the hallway.

“How many people must I compete with for your attention?” Hannibal asked, seductively, pulling him closer by the hand he was still holding.

Will was saved from responding when a handsome gentleman came over and wrapped an arm around Gabi. “Are you alright, little darling?” He asked in a heavy southern drawl, pressing a kiss to her temple.

“Of course, my love,” she responded with a besotted smile. The second the man appeared she lit up with the glow of love. “This is my dear husband Samuel. Samuel this is Will Graham and you remember Hannibal.”

“It’s a pleasure to meet you Mr Graham. Nice to see you again Doctor Lecter,” Will watched the man closely, although not openly cold he certainly was not comfortable around Hannibal.

“No need to be so formal Samuel,” Hannibal replied with a smooth smile. “I told you five years ago that while our Gabi is happy you and I can be friends.”

“I like my boys to get along,” Gabi said, mocking their standoff.

“I am sorry to interrupt but with the weather getting worse and worse we need to leave now or risk being stranded,” he said apologetically.

“Oh such a shame,” Gabi said. “We are having dinner with Hannibal and Will before going home,” she informed him, and he nodded pleasantly.

“Whatever you want,” he answered, hiding his reluctance admirably.

“It was so lovely to see you again Hannibal,” she said pulling him into a long embrace before turning to Will. “Wonderful to meet you,” she said warmly and kindly offered him a hand to shake rather than trying to pull him into a hug. He gratefully shook her hand and spied the

delicate bracelet encircling her wrist. White gold with sapphire and diamonds. “Your bracelet is lovely,” he said, voice low with suspicion, unnoticed by anyone but Hannibal.

“Thank you, it was a gift. Hannibal’s taste is impeccable as always,” he nodded, in agreement, pointedly releasing Hannibal’s hand. They exchanged polite goodbyes which Will missed as the jealousy roared in his ears. His whole body felt ready to combust and he suddenly felt ridiculous dressed up in clothes he couldn’t afford with accessories he didn’t even choose for himself. His heavy watch felt like a metal cuff, chafing his wrist and suddenly far too tight. He had loved being spoiled by Hannibal, with food and gifts and now he wondered how old she had been when they had their dalliance. Had it been a short term, purely physically fling or a long lazy summer of love? Gabi was clearly madly in love with her husband, it was clear in the way she looked at him and the way his large hands moved over her exposed skin.

The bracelet bothered him more than their dancefloor embrace. So similar to his watch it made him feel branded, like cattle. His gaze travelled over the room and he wondered how many of the attendants wore sapphire and diamonds around their wrists. A small voice in his head told him he was being ridiculous but the jealousy whispering in his ear was much louder and more insistent. An even more insistent voice pulled him out of his dark thoughts. “Will? Are you alright?” Hannibal looked at him with concern as he slipped his phone back into his inside pocket.

“Fine,” he said shortly.

“Unfortunately, it appears it would be wise to remain here overnight,” Hannibal said. “The weathermen were inaccurate in their predictions and travelling is strongly discouraged unless absolutely necessary.”

“It is absolutely necessary,” Will responded with cold detachment.

“The taxi companies are unwilling to travel and both of us are over the legal limit, The best option would be to get a room here,” he answered levelly, watching Will with curiosity.

“This is why I didn’t want to come to this stupid thing,” Will hissed, rounding on Hannibal.

“That is not why you didn’t want to come but if it makes you happy then you were correct,” Hannibal said calmly.

“I’m not happy,” he snapped.

“Clearly,” Hannibal said slowly. He turned on his heel and strode away towards the reception.

“Where are you going?” Will demanded, following him, still burning with jealousy and humiliation.

“We will not be the only ones stranded so unless you wish to sleep in the lobby, ensuring a room now would be wise, he approached the desk, removing his wallet.

“How can I help you?” Asked a smartly dressed woman behind the counter.

“Hello, I apologise for the short notice but I was hoping that I could book a room for tonight,” he said smoothly.

“Two rooms,” Will interjected. Hannibal nodded.

“Two rooms,” he repeated. The woman searched the system before looking up with a bright smile.

“You are lucky, sir, we have two rooms left, a double and a twin.”

“Thank you,” Hannibal responded and Will stood stewing, choking on the sour taste now coating his mouth as she took Hannibal’s information. When it came to payment Will slid his own credit card across the counter, it would empty his account but he knew Hannibal would consider this a personal, if petty, attack and he meant it that way. Hannibal did not say a word, simply slid the card off the counter and replaced it with his own, holding Will’s at his side until they key cards were placed on the counter. He took the twin room and handed Will the key for the double room along with his credit card and a charming smile.

“Not funny,” Will growled and walked away. Hannibal caught up with him quickly and gently pressed Will’s back into the wall, crowding him against it.

“Talk to me,” he ordered voice soft as a whisper, one forearm resting against the wall.

“What about?” Will sassed, tilting his chin upwards but focusing his eyes on Hannial’s forehead rather than his eyes.

“Whatever it is that has caused this terrible mood you are in,” he said. “I realise that getting a hotel room is not ideal but I assume there is something else bothering you,” he prompted.

“I’m tired and I want to go home, which I can’t. Now move,” he ordered, proud that his voice didn’t shake and pleased when he saw a flicker of surprise in Hannibal’s eyes. Hannibal stayed in place, his face stoic as he took in Will’s appearance. His curls had begun to rebel against their forced submission and fall around his flushed face. Pink lips parted as his breathing became heavy and his eyes blazed. Hannibal felt his own breathing change when he saw the look in his eyes. Utterly feral and vicious, green completely masking his usual blue and shining with intensity. Beautiful and dangerous and it made him ache with want. “I’m going to bed,” he growled. “Go back to the party. I’m sure you can find yourself a dancing partner,” he tried to shoulder his way past Hannibal but a firm hand on the knot of his tie pressed him back against the cool marble wall. Finally he looked Hannibal in the eye as a low snarl escaped his lips. He was a precious piece of art come to life and Hannibal was struck dumb by his violent beauty. Hannibal realised that he had pushed his darling boy right to the brink, perhaps further than he should have. Part of him wanted to force Will to admit to his jealousy but most of the night had been so enjoyable that he was afraid to lose the progress he had made by pushing too far. He wanted Will to emerge from his cocoon strong and beautiful enough to bring the world to its knees. That would never happen if he broke him too early. Softly he brushed a curl out of Will’s eyes, stung when he jerked away. “Hannibal,” Will warned.

“You are upset with me for dancing with Gabi,” he stated, not asking and Will looked down at the floor. “I have mentioned in the past that I do not apologise often lest it become less meaningful and thus redundant. However, I did promise to stay by your side tonight and to break that promise, no matter the circumstances, was shameful behaviour on my part,” he brought a hand up to rest on the side of Will’s throat, his thumb brushing along the edge of his sharp jaw. Touch firm but gentle he guided Will’s face until he could hold his emerald orbs, gorgeous. “I am truely sorry, Will,” his voice was as steady as always but there was deep sincerity carved into every syllable. “I beg your forgiveness,” his eyes dropped down to focus on Will’s lips, his voice barely audible.

Will pressed his lips together and moved out of Hannibal's grasp. “You can dance with whoever you want,” he said coldly. “I saw the bracelet you bought her,” he added, forcing his tone not to sound accusatory but it came off thick with jealousy.

“Do you expect me to apologise for buying one of my closest friends a graduation gift more than ten years before we met?” He asked, making it sound ridiculous. “There is no reason for you to be jealous, Will,” he said softly. “In the short time we have known each other you have become very important to me. I regret that you cannot see that,” he continued, fingers tracing over his diamond cufflinks, the face of his watch and down to brush over his fingers. Will nodded though his eyes were still guarded. He was beginning to understand that despite Hannibal’s vast sums of money, his gifts were a way of showing that he cared. “Come, can’t we have one more drink while saying goodbye?”

“Why not?” Will said, with a tight smile. Hannibal lingered before stepping back, his fingers leaving Will’s slowly. They headed back into the ballroom together, at the doorway Will discreetly wrapped a hand loosely around Hannibal’s wrist. Hiding his pleased smile Hannibal gently pulled his captured arm away, testing. Pleasure sparked in his gut when Will’s grip tightened, a possessive warning touch and Hannibal knew he had not yet earned forgiveness. The night was quickly winding down as people tried to find some sort of emergency transport or a place to stay nearby. A tray of champagne had been abandoned and Hannibal handed Will a glass before helping himself. “I think you were right about getting the rooms.”

“It seems almost selfish to take up two,” Hannibal commented, lightly. Will took three deep gulps to avoid answering. People were leaving rapidly or else arguing with staff who desperately rang every hotel on the street to try and find the more demanding guests rooms. At one point Will overheard a manager offering the staff double wages to keep the wine lounge open all night so at least they did not have to force the unlucky guests out into the foot deep snow. The staff likewise had no way to leave and reluctantly agreed. Will was able to relax with his drink as almost every person they had spoken to that night sought out Hannibal to say their farewells and he made a point to remind each of them to make a donation on the way out.

“You have quite a talent for fundraising,” Will joked quietly.

“A worthy cause,” Hannibal commented, smiling at the compliment. Will hid a quiet laugh behind his hand. “What?”

“Two o’clock,” Will whispered, leaning in close. Hannibal followed his gaze and hid his own laugh more effectively. Slumped on a low couch Fredrick Chilton sat alone, glowering at the room in general with a bag of ice pressed against his bruising right eye. “I know I am challenging karma here but I wish I’d actually seen the punch itself.”

“Wicked boy,” Hannibal chided. “Though I believe taking pleasure in karmas effect is a lesser sin at most.”

“So I don’t need to watch out for convenient accidents?” Will asked.

“I will watch over you,” Hannibal said warmly. Will’s cheeks turned pink and Hannibal hid his grin behind his glass. The pianist stepped up to a microphone stand and gathered the room's attention.

“Sadly, due to unpredicted weather we will be finishing up early but we do have a special surprise for our last song.” he gestured towards a young lady who came to join them on stage. Will remembered speaking to her early, she was a musical theatre actress whose name began with a ‘T’, she had just triumphed in her first leading role. “Many of you will recognise the very talented Miss Tabitha Raine who recently won a Tony for her role in the musical adaptation of ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’!” Will raised an eyebrow but no one else seemed to find his announcement strange.

“‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’?” Will repeated.

“Yes, it involved puppets,” Hannibal answered with an amused smile. “Very colourful.” They missed whatever else the pianist said as he took his seat and the singer stepped up to the microphone. As the first notes began the energy in the room lifted and the dance floor filled up quickly. “A universally loved song,” Hannibal commented and began to tug Will towards the floor.

“A modern Christmas classic,” Will agreed and released Hannibal’s wrist with a small head shake. Hannibal actually rolled his eyes as his smile grew and he grabbed Will’s hand pulling him along behind him, forcing Will to choose between joining him or creating a scene. He gave Hannibal a firm look which was completely ignored as Hannibal pulled him in close, spinning them both around. Will tried to hold his irritated expression but found it difficult with Hannibal smiling and Beverley a few feet away singing along at the top of her lungs. Will was grateful that Price and Zeller were far away as they had given up on dancing and were instead holding each other upright, connected by their swollen lips. By the second chorus he was laughing along with everyone else hand-in-hand with Hannibal and for once not feeling like he was in the wrong room and waiting to be thrown out. He was breathless from laughing and uncoordinated but found himself having fun, the unlikeliness of it all making him laugh harder. The song came to an end and was rewarded with applause and the ballroom emptied. A few brave souls went to battle the elements, others resigned themselves to waiting for transport companies to open in the wine lounge and the lucky few headed upstairs.

Will had failed to notice that he had not spoken to Alana until she caught up to them in the lobby. “Merry Christmas Hannibal, Will,” she said pleasantly, face flushed and words slightly slurred. “Are you coming to the wine lounge slumber party?” She asked with a merry laugh.

“As delightful as that sounds, we were both able to secure a room,” Hannibal answered.

“Lucky you, I’m dead on my feet and stuck waiting for the roads to clear,” she covered a large yawn with her hand. “At least there is a thick carpet as these heels are coming off the second I sit down.”

“You are also lucky as I find myself in the position of being able to offer you a bed for the night,” Hannibal said. “My room is a twin,” he added upon seeing her expression.

“Hannibal, are you a Christmas angel?” She asked.

“Far from it,” he answered with a soft laugh. He saw Will’s expression darken a little, his eyes lighting up as he subconsciously pressed his arms against Hannibal’s. Hannibal was about to suggest he give Alana his room and took Hannibal’s extra when Beverley hurried up, heels in her hand.

“Will, do you have a room?” She asked frantically, and he nodded.

“Please, please tell me you have an extra bed,” she begged. “I booked a room with Jimmy and Z so we didn’t need to worry about finding a sober ride home but… you saw them on the dance floor. You cannot make me go into a room with them, please,” she continued. “It would be cruel, to them, to me, to love! Don’t be cruel to love.”

“My room is a double,” he answered awkwardly. “Only one bed.”

“I promise to be a perfect gentlemanlady and even stuff pillows between us if it will make you feel better,” she said, with a teasing tone. “I’ll let you hog the covers and eat my pillow mint,” Will squirmed uncomfortably. Hannibal watched him like a hawk, waiting to see what he would do and saw the moment he made a decision when his eyes settled on Alana.

“You should take Hannibal’s bed,” he said.

“Hannibal’s?” She asked, Alana looked between them in confusion.

“Yeah. It makes sense, girls in one room, boys in the, um, other,” he finished weakly.

“That’s fine with me,” Beverly said, her dark eyes sliding between the two men with a mischievous smile on her face. Will made a mental note to avoid any tight places she could lock him in with Hannibal.

“I think it is an excellent idea. If the snow thaws I will be driving Will home in the morning, after breakfast of course,” he said smoothly. He fished his card out of his pocket and handed it to Beverley. “Help yourself to water from the mini-bar, you need to hydrate.”

“Yes, Doctor,” Beverley said with a mock salute, heading into the elevator.

“She is going to be in pain tomorrow,” Will whispered as they joined the ladies.

“I doubt she will be suffering alone,” Hannibal responded smiling. His hand moved to rest on Will’s back, only an inch away from wrapping around his waist.

The elevator ride was short and silent save for Alana's sigh of relief when she removed her shoes. The rooms were on the same floor and the four walked to the twin room in a group.

"Thank you!" Beverley sang, opening the door on her third try and stumbling on her way into the room.

Alana pulled Hannibal into a hug. "Thank you so much for this Hannibal," she said before kissing the corner of his mouth. Hannibal was the only one with hearing strong enough to notice the change in Will's breathing, accompanied by a low growl. "Sleep well," she added, waving cheerfully as she entered the room.

As they moved along the hallway towards the double room Hannibal's arm slipped closer, wrapping around Will's waist. Will looked downwards, face pink but he didn't object. When they reached the door, right at the end of the hall by a full length window showcasing the falling snow, Hannibal placed his hand over Will's, stopping him from opening the door. He moved in closer, fingers tangling with Will's as his eyes fixed on his boy's trembling lips. "You haven't asked," he said softly. Will shook his head. "Do you want to ask now?" He questioned.

"No," Will breathed. Hannibal let out an almost silent moan.

"Have you analysed the evidence?" he asked, bringing a hand up to Will's neck, stroking the burning skin, fingers dipping below his colour. Will nodded, his own eyes drifted to Hannibal's mouth. "And?" He prompted.

"I think… it feels like a date, to me," he said, voice rough. "You?" He asked timidly.

"I agree," Hannibal answered with a smile, softly pressing his forehead to Will's. Will's eyes fluttered, falling shut as he gripped Hannibal's fingers. Humming happily Hannibal leaned in pressing his lips to Will's and cupping his jaw in his hands. The moan this spurred was louder and wanting. He'd imagined the fresh taste of Will's mouth so many times and his imagination had completely failed him. The boy's taste reminded him of a darkened forest, drenched in rain, sweeter than anything Hannibal had ever tasted, the champagne lingering on his lips being the perfect seasoning. Electricity danced along his lips, his whole body yearning to press in closer as Will's mouth opened wider and he sought to deepen the kiss, wonderful boy.

Will felt his knees go weak the second their lips met and he clung to Hannibal's broad frame with a needy whimper. His head was swimming, feeling as though Hannibal's hands on him was the one thing keeping him grounded. He curled his fingers into the lapels of Hannibal's jacket, keeping him close and unable to let go. Will felt desperate and wanting, his jealousy fueling his passion. Parting his lips he sought to deepen the kiss, consumed by heat and the drive to claim Hannibal as his, only his. Growing bold he slid his tongue into Hannibal's mouth groaning weakly when he felt Hannibal's tongue move against his, explosions going off within him. His mouth was hot and wet and the dark taste was exquisite. Will never believed that anything could taste better than the juicy meat Hannibal liked to serve him but his mouth was heavenly. It could have been hours but after what felt like seconds Hannibal pulled back, Will followed with a whine and was stopped by Hannibal's hand on his own lapels. The animalistic growl came from his mouth unbidden, embarrassingly feral as tried to

pull Hannibal back to him. With a dreamy smile Hannibal held him in place as he gave him a last lingering but chaste kiss. Will's eyes opened reluctantly as he gazed up at Hannibal in a daze.

“Goodnight kiss,” Hannibal said, as though that explained his denial. “Perfect,” he purred, voice deep. He reluctantly removed his hands from Will’s lapels and taking Will’s wrist in his hands he removed them from him, taking a step back and standing upright. “Thank you, Will. I had a wonderful time with you,” Will looked at him with confusion at what sounded like a goodbye. When Will made no move to open the door Hannibal took the key from his hand and opened the door easily.

“H-Hannibal?” He stammered, barely able to speak.

Hannibal smiled sweetly and brushed Will’s curls back. “I think it would be best to be clear that the date aspect of the evening is over before we enter a hotel room together,” he said gently.

“Over?” Will asked, disappointed.

“For tonight,” Hannibal answered, gesturing for Will to enter the room. His body was still vibrating, as he entered the spacious room. It was very different from the dated motel rooms he usually found himself staying in. The room was decorated in dark neutral colours with pale pine furniture dotted around, a small seating area was visible on entry and around a sharp corner was the king size bed, snowy white bedding and a mint on each pillow. He swallowed thickly as he eyed the bed, there was no sofa he could insist on sleeping on and he doubted Hannibal would let him sleep on the floor, comfortable as the push carpet looked. The room was easily big enough for two people to sleep comfortably without so much as brushing against each other, probably a good thing, especially since their date was over, for tonight.

He started when Hannibal brushed past him to pick up one of two simple bamboo boxes sat on the coffee table. “I asked for two overnight packs to be sent up as neither of us thought to bring our own,” he explained. He turned the box to the side and began to read the list. “Toothbrush, toothpaste, disposable razor, travel size shaving cream, condoms, lubricant and a fresh pair of boxers,” Hannibal hid his smirk well when Will’s breath caught when he mentioned condoms. “Would you mind if I showered first?” He asked politely.

“No, um, go ahead,” Will said nervously. Hannibal headed towards the adjoining bathroom calmly.

“Hang up your suit, WIll,” he instructed him, handing him a terry cloth robe. “It will wrinkle.”

Will took the robe as he felt his legs turn to wood. He silently swore to bring his satchel everywhere with a change of clothes. When he heard the lock to the bathroom door click he let out a long breath and stripped off his suit, covering himself with a robe in record time. He sat stiffly on one of the comfortable chairs, and tried to quiet his mind. Hannibal’s

specification that the date was over ran through his head. Did that mean no more non-platonic touches and, disappointingly, no more kisses? If so, did that also mean sex was off the table, and was that a good thing? Sex was often considered a post-date activity but the way Hannibal had said it implied that that was not going to happen and no-one showered before sex, although Will thought that was a good idea, his mind was wandering now.

It was a good thing, Will told himself, taking sex out of the equation for now. He could no longer deny his attraction to the older man. An attraction that had previously manifested as fleeting thoughts about his silky accent and fine bone structure, though he tried to chase away those thoughts as soon as they arrived. But, as arousing as the kiss had been, Will wasn't ready to cross that line. The boundaries with Hannibal were always fuzzy, he trusted Hannibal to keep his secrets as a therapist but technically they were just having conversations. Professional went out of the window very early on because, as Hannibal predicted, Will did find him interesting. Completely fascinating at times. Sex would blur things even more especially since this was their first date. Will felt himself relax a little when he considered that. Hannibal wouldn't try anything tonight. His head knew that was a good thing but the rest of him didn't agree. His body wanted and was making that want known, he was glad his boxers were snug, any looser and he'd be sporting a tent.

Needing to do something with his hands Will picked up the uponed overnight box. One size fits all boxers were a nice touch he thought while examining the rest, all useful, he left the condoms and sachet of strawberry lube in the bottom, crossing his legs. He jumped to his feet when he heard the bathroom door open. Hannibal exited, steam making him look ethereal, or demonic. He was wrapped in his own complimentary robe, his hair damp and darkened from the hot water. He was carrying his own suit in his hands. "The shower is free," he pointed out, hanging up his own clothes next to Wills, the sight oddly pleasant in its domesticity.

Will slipped into the bathroom and kept the shower lukewarm to discourage his rebellious body from growing any harder. After several long minutes he was back in control of his body. He took his time brushing his teeth and untangling his wet hair before emerging in his robe and boxers.

Hannibal was already in bed when he came out, he was reclined bare-chested, quilt pulled up to his waist as he ideally watched something on the plasma tv. The ends of his hair curled around his ears, still slightly wet. He smiled at Will as he exited and Will's mind went blank. "Octopi," he observed lamely, glancing at the television screen.

"Octopuses," Hannibal corrected, mildly.

"Really?"

"Look it up," he suggested, clicking off the screen, leaving the room lit only by the glow of a bedside lamp. "It's late Will, are you coming to bed?" Will couldn't resist trailing his eyes over Hannibal quickly but not quick enough to miss the pleased look in Hannibal's eyes. He awkwardly and slowly made his way to the available side of the bed, feeling Hannibal's eyes follow his every movement. "May I ask you something?" Hannibal asked, rolling onto his side to face Will fully, propping himself up on one elbow. Will nodded, happy to delay removing his robe for a little longer.

“Yeah, of course,” he said hurriedly. Hannibal took his time choosing his words.

“Why did you suggest I swap rooms with Beverley?” he asked, Will looked at the floor, unable to answer. “Did you not trust Miss Katz to share your bed?” He teased. “Or did you simply not want me to share a room with Alana?” His voice was deeper and his eyes twinkled as though daring Will to answer. “Were you feeling jealous again?”

“I’m not jealous of Alana,” Will snapped, looking up with eyes a swirling mix of blue and green. “I just don’t want you two discussing me,” he said quietly.

“I told you she makes efforts not to do so,” Hannibal reminded him.

“And do you?” Will asked.

“Do you worry we will discuss you in a professional or personal way?” Hannibal asked, levelly.

“Both,” Will answered, glowering slightly.

“Very well,” Hannibal said. “As I am not your official psychiatrist there is no reason for me to discuss you with Alana on a professional level. As your friend, I promise to avoid any personal discussion of you, despite the fact you are a favourite subject of mine,” he soothed with a hint of flirtation.

“Thank you, Hannibal,” Will responded.

“Come to bed, Will,” Hannibal urged softly, turning to flick off the lamp. Will took the opportunity to drop his robe and duck under the covers while his back was turned.

He pulled the sheets up to his chin and faced away from Hannibal, close to the edge. “What was that Gabrielle called you?” He asked quietly. “Mon ami… something.”

“Mon ami de coeur,” Hannibal recited, Will shivered when he realised that Hannibal was closer than he realised. “My heart friend,” he answered. The scent of jealousy spiked briefly, no longer tarnished by aftershave and the scentless cosmetics provided by the hotel left it completely unaffected.

“Good night Hannibal.”

“Good night, Will,” he whispered, moving back a little.

Will tried desperately to force his mind into silence and his body to rest but he was full of adrenaline and even watching the snow slowly drift by the window didn’t sooth him. He listened to Hannibal’s breathing, slow and deep, until he was sure the older man with a talent for tangling his thoughts, was fast asleep. He rolled over to face Hannibal who was flat on his back, lips parted and impossibly still, the rhythmic rise and flat of his chest the only sign he was still alive. Even fast asleep he was a stunningly beautiful man. Will examined his profile, slowly memorising every fine line and the exact shade of his complexion in the low light. Unease gnawed away at his stomach lining, Hannibal was leading him by the hand further out of his comfort space and it terrified and thrilled in equal measure.

He wasn't alone and might not have to continue in his self-imposed solitude forevermore. It was a thought he'd never entertained for more than a brief moment in the past. Everyone left him when they got spooked by the way his mind works or couldn't handle the sweat-soaked sheets and nightmares that came whether he slept alone or not. Hannibal knew him from the inside and Will trusted the man with his life.

But there was jealousy, and Will couldn't imagine a future where he wasn't weak to the feeling. It didn't seem to bother Hannibal as much as it did him, he suspected the man found it amusing. Jealousy was always rooted in insecurity and everywhere Hannibal went he drew attention without even trying. Will could live with it but he worried that Hannibal would get sick of reassuring him or maybe even realise that Will's insecurities were not unfounded and he wasn't nearly as extraordinary as Hannibal thought him to be. He wanted to be, wanted to see what it was that Hannibal saw that he found so interesting. The way Hannibal looked at him was intoxicating and not once had he looked at someone else like that. Will inched closer, curious as to whether Hannibal was wearing boxers under the soft duvet but far too timid to check. Hannibal's warm scent enveloped him, more earthy than his aftershave with a streak of sharp bitterness. Comforting and tempting at the same time, more effective than the several sleep sprays he had attempted over the years. Champagne sleepiness was tugging on his eyelids, he was warm and comfortable and finally his mind was losing its ability to hold onto a single train of thought for more than a few seconds. He inhaled deeply and let his eyes fall shut, matching his breathing to Hannibals's as he drifted into a deep, heavy sleep.

A moment later Hannibal's eyes snapped open, Will had dropped off faster than he expected. He shifted onto his side, watching Will's pupils dart behind his eyelids, he smiled, REM sleep was important. Will had a lot to process. He had been so desperate earlier that Hannibal had to stop things though he struggled to do so. It would have been so easy to open the door, lead Will directly to the bed, peel his fine suit away and mark the naked, sensitive skin underneath as his own. Will would not have resisted for a second and Hannibal wanted so much to claim his prize. But he feared that Will was not ready for that, not yet. Hannibal would not have him for one night, especially not when he was still unsure if Will would regret it in the morning. He was patient, he could wait. When he finally had Will he would possess him completely, mind, body and soul, and he would enjoy making his boy beg for it so prettily.

For now he entered his mind palace searching for the jealous, feral Will he wanted to keep. The scent of over-ripe fruit filled the air, sweet wild orange and pomegranate seeds, Hannibal followed it, finding the beautiful green eyed beast already wandering the halls. Silent he guided him to a dust-covered room Hannibal felt little need to visit. It was filled with mementos, photos, trinkets and notes connected to past lovers, none of which meant anything compared to Will. He adjusted the room slightly, added a picture of Gabi, glowing with love on her wedding day. His real memory of Gabi was a child hidden away in the garden making daisy chains and softly singing the Lithuanian rhymes he taught her. Will had imagined their history together and Hannibal had not enlightened him. His possessive jealous Will entered the room with a vicious growl advancing on Hannibal. He placed his hand on the visions face, stroking his heated skin. He did love to corrupt his boy, such potential.

Hannibal drifted back to the present, leaving the memory to grow stronger. His Will looked like an angel in his sleep, face free of his usual worried lines, perfectly at peace. There was

no sign of the deep darkness growing inside him but still he was everything sinful and beautiful.

My vicious jealous boy.

End Notes

Kudos and comments bring me joy while feedback and request are always gratefully received.

Competition time! They first reader to correctly guess which romantic Christmas bop the boys danced to you get your very own fic! Name the tune to make the writer monkey dance. This one of my favourite Christmas tunes and I once went to a Christmas Eve party where this number was played three times. How no-one was blinded by vigorous pointing I will never know.

And no, it's not Fairytale of New York.

See you next time for pride.

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!